

Royal Cross Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133688
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	381532
Inspection dates	17–18 October 2011
Reporting inspector	Terry McKenzie

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	23
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jeanette Greer
Headteacher	Ruth Nottingham
Date of previous school inspection	27 January 2009
School address	Elswick Road Ashton-on-Ribble Preston PR2 1NT
Telephone number	01772 729705
Fax number	01772 729866
Email address	head@royalcross.lancs.sch.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. Six lessons and an assembly were observed, involving five teachers. Several short visits were made to each of the classrooms to gather information. Meetings were held with parents and carers, a member of the governing body, senior leaders and a group of pupils. Less-formal discussions were held with members of staff and pupils in their classes. The inspector observed the school's work, and looked at records, policies and a range of documents. Twenty questionnaires from parents and carers were scrutinised.

The inspection reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Whether teaching is good enough to encourage the maximum gains in attainment for all groups of pupils.
- The extent to which the curriculum provides opportunities for all individuals and groups to be included in learning.
- The extent to which care, guidance and support and safeguarding promote high-quality outcomes for pupils.
- Whether all leaders and managers are effective in utilising targets to improve the school and maintain high standards.

Information about the school

Royal Cross Primary School specialises in providing education for pupils and children with severe hearing impairments. All have a statement of special educational needs. Pupils come from the whole of Lancashire and many travel long distances to school each day. The majority of pupils experience additional barriers to learning, including speech and communication difficulties, moderate learning difficulties, mobility problems and autistic spectrum conditions. For most, English is an additional language, with the greatest number of pupils coming from families of Asian origin. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is higher than for most other schools, as is the degree to which pupils' join and leave the school other than at the usual times. There are many more boys than girls in the school. There is currently only a very small number of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The school gained the Gold Award for Investors in People in 2010, the Activemark in 2008 and has maintained its Healthy School status. Royal Cross has recently gained a proficiency accreditation in the Creative Partnerships' Curious Minds project.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Royal Cross is an outstanding school. Pupils receive a remarkable quality of education and outstanding care, guidance and support. Their achievements are superb. Through the outstanding support of the classroom staff, they make sustained and excellent progress, even though their starting points in the school are usually very low. Pupils report that they feel very safe and demonstrate remarkable trust in the adults with whom they work. Their behaviour is exemplary and they take up many opportunities to practise healthy lifestyles, through eating very well at lunchtime and joining in with the exceptional range of indoor and outdoor physical activities such as 'wake and shake'.

Usually, pupils enter the school having experienced isolation in their lives because of their communication problems. Nevertheless, most learn quickly to understand the signs and words of others. Consequently, they make very rapid gains in their social and moral development as they learn to communicate. In school and beyond, friendships become possible, relationships are established that were previously very difficult and pupils become extremely competent in contributing to the work of the school and the wider community. Attendance has improved steadily since the last inspection to become average, but more can yet be achieved to raise attendance higher for a very few.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding. Consequently, children starting in Year 1 are happy and keen to learn. In both Key Stages 1 and 2, teaching is outstanding because staff are highly skilled in working with the hearing impaired. The staff are determined to provide opportunities for all to achieve their best. The outstanding curriculum provides excellent content for pupils, whatever their ages or learning difficulties. Parents and carers are extremely appreciative of the school. One typical comment was 'This school has transformed my daughter's life.'

The outstanding work of the senior leaders is recognised and valued by the local authority. Good safeguarding ensures that recruitment procedures and child protection arrangements are undertaken thoroughly. The headteacher has successfully encouraged staff to work together exceptionally well, in order to further the common purpose of providing the best possible academic and personal development for each pupil. Staff morale is very high and this was recognised when the school gained the Gold Standard for Investors in People. Staff comment that remarkable opportunities have been provided for them to further their skills to the

benefit of pupils. School leaders have improved all aspects of the school since the last inspection. For example, there are now highly effective arrangements in place to ensure that excellent communications are maintained with the great majority of pupils' families. Leaders analyse pupils' records carefully to ensure that all are making progress towards their targets. Self-evaluation is very thorough. Consequently, improvement planning is directed with precision. High-quality partnerships have been created with other schools, medical professionals, therapists and the local authority. They are extremely effective in supporting pupils' learning and welfare. Thus, there is outstanding capacity to sustain improvement. Governance is good, but the governing body could provide even more challenge to senior leaders by considering more consistently how pupils can continue to get the very best outcomes from the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve attendance for the exceptionally few pupils from families that are hard to reach.
- Improve the effectiveness of the governing body through its members being more aware of pupils' outcomes, as well as the services that the school provides, in order that they are better able to challenge senior leaders with regard to all aspects of the life of the school.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils enjoy coming to school very much and their achievement is outstanding. In most lessons, there is an infectious enthusiasm for learning. Pupils' achievements are remarkable as a result of their outstanding progress. For example, in a cookery lesson, outstanding learning was evident when pupils were required to recount their activities in sequential order, a remarkable undertaking for those with emerging communication skills. The school's records indicate that almost all pupils make progress far in excess of expectations. Progress is regular and sustained for individuals and all groups of pupils, including those with recognised additional difficulties, such as autistic spectrum conditions. Some continue to make outstanding progress from the Early Years Foundation Stage through to the end of Key Stage 2. Their achievements are due to the successful development of communication that enables them to participate in learning. For almost all, their difficulties are so severe that despite the outstanding progress made, their attainment is unlikely to ever rise above low. Despite this, the great majority gain the effective personal skills required to help them secure their futures in secondary education and beyond.

Pupils are welcoming to visitors. They demonstrate exceptionally high standards of behaviour. Pupils at the higher stages of personal development understand about right and wrong. They contribute to the making of classroom and school rules. Pupils become confident in dealing with others and they build lasting relationships. Consequently, they feel completely safe and communicate this ardently when questioned. They enjoy contributing very much and having their voices heard. The school council is a vibrant body that makes decisions and influences the way that the school operates, for example, in helping to plan the new playground. They are so

confident that they take their council to other schools and invite others to Royal Cross. One councillor commented ‘We learn from others and bring their good ideas back here!’ Their communication skills are exercised further at lunchtimes, when they are forthright in making choices about their meals from the range of healthy options available.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	*
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is outstanding. Teachers are experienced in working with pupils with a range of special educational needs and/or disabilities and are specialists in teaching the deaf. They plan exciting and interesting tasks, often with an emphasis on practical and creative work. Adults encourage pupils successfully to participate in groups and provide opportunities for each to contribute to the best of their ability. Thus, all are included in lessons and in larger groups such as in assembly. Teachers maintain excellent records of pupils' progress. Consequently, they always know pupils' levels of ability. They provide individual and shared learning experiences well matched to pupils' needs. In most lessons, pupils are challenged to make very small, but measurable steps of progress based on clear targets for improvement, but, in a few lessons, these small steps are not identified specifically. Nevertheless, all adults use the longer-term targets from individual learning plans.

The outstanding curriculum is new, but embedded fully. All pupils have full access to the National Curriculum and all subjects are provided with a themed approach designed to enhance pupils' communication skills. That provides marvellous opportunities for pupils with limited communication skills to demonstrate their creativity in activities such as drama. The themed curriculum encourages the adults in the school to offer their skills to enhance pupils' learning. For example, teaching assistants provide lessons such as cookery and pupils receive lessons from a wider

¹The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

range of adults. Thus, they come to establish a wider group of relationships in school.

Care, guidance and support are great strengths of the school. The adults know all of the pupils very well. Pupils are welcomed in the morning and many, particularly those with autistic spectrum conditions, are provided with highly effective periods of familiarisation upon arrival, so that they can complete this transition successfully and engage in learning. Throughout the day, the adults are constantly watchful of pupils, understanding that many are incapable of expressing feelings of discomfort. The support that pupils receive, in their learning and their personal development, is extremely sensitive and effective. Staff are successful in engaging pupils and supporting their achievements. Furthermore, skilfully, they develop ways by which successes can be recognised and celebrated. They communicate praise to great effect. The exceptionally high levels of support are instrumental in encouraging almost all pupils to maintain regular attendance and gain important skills, despite the persistent medical difficulties of many. However, a very few are occasionally absent at times when medical difficulties have not been the cause.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has implemented many improvements since the last inspection. Consequently, almost all aspects of the school are outstanding and are continuing to improve. The quality of teaching has improved greatly because of better use of assessment information when planning lessons and matching tasks to individuals' needs and abilities. Leaders at all levels have robust systems in place to record and report pupils' achievements. The information is used by senior staff to ensure that all aspects of pupils' education are progressing smoothly. Challenging targets are set for pupils in lessons.

The effective governing body is stable and improving. Members visit the school and observe the way that education and care is provided, demonstrating their high regard and aspiration for the school. However, they do not always take full account of what pupils do, in order to challenge the school's performance. The governing body takes its responsibilities seriously and ensures that all required reviews of school documents and procedures are undertaken. It helps to ensure that the good safeguarding measures in school are robust and fit for purpose. The school maintains good-quality policies in respect of safeguarding and meets all of the requirements for recruitment and good-quality training has been provided to all.

The inclusion of all in the life and work of the school is ensured through rigorous attention to the detail of pupils' performance and their involvement in lessons. A liaison officer works in the school and is highly effective in establishing and

maintaining contacts with the families from Asian backgrounds. That has been instrumental in enabling the majority of parents and carers who speak English as an additional language to communicate with the school and share in their children's achievements. Thus, the promotion of equality is outstanding. None is discriminated against. The school is a cohesive community in its own right, but, through the wide range of partnerships and links with others, it promotes tolerance and harmony actively. Thus, through its outstanding work these pupils with severe communication difficulties meet a wide range of people from many different backgrounds. Through ensuring that the outcomes for pupils are outstanding and by the diligent use of the property and resources, the school provides outstanding value for money.

These are the grades for the leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

The outcomes for children are outstanding because of the rapid progress that they make in learning and children express high levels of enjoyment. For example, in an activity where the teacher was encouraging the development of skills for speaking, children responded enthusiastically to a story and one child began spontaneously to dance. Resources are employed imaginatively and the pace of activity is consistently high. Therefore, children begin to overcome their communication difficulties, start to engage in activities and contribute exceptionally well. Children are very well prepared for moving on to Year 1. Relationships between the children and staff are exceptional because the staff are among the first people outside their immediate families with whom they have been able to express their thoughts and feelings successfully. Consequently, behaviour is outstanding and they feel very safe.

The provision is outstanding. Staff maintain detailed records of children's progress. Assessment takes place often while activities are underway. For example, during activities, moments of achievement are recorded on camera. The environment of the classroom has been designed carefully so that children with extreme difficulties are stimulated to respond to a wide variety of structures and colours. The outdoor area is large and well equipped, so that children can exercise and play creatively.

Record keeping is very well organised. It is always clear what has been achieved and what should come next. The coordinator of the unit has excellent qualifications and

experience in working with deaf children. Thus, staff have a superb understanding of the children’s difficulties, including the additional barriers to learning, such as autism. The unit has established strong links with the cochlea implant team at Manchester, so that children who receive treatment for hearing loss are dealt with consistently. Much is done to assist parents and carers and this is much appreciated by that group. Thus, through the exceptional degree of organisation and attention to the specific requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage, leadership and management are outstanding.

The unit has improved consistently since the last inspection and has maintained high-quality partnerships and relationships with parents and carers, agencies and medical workers so that children can attend regularly and get the best from the facility. The coordinator has plans to improve the provision further, for example in considering how children in the early stages of their development of communication can do more to lead activities.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

By the end of the on-site inspection, 20 completed questionnaires were received from parents and carers. That is a high return for a provision of this type. The responses were entirely positive, with no negative responses recorded at all. A number of parents or carers wrote comments, such as ‘My child loves going to school’ and ‘Keep up the good work!’

Three parents attended a meeting with the inspector and were keen to express their gratitude for the work done by staff. They explained that, without this school, their children would probably have limited opportunities for success in education. All were keen to confirm that their children were now able to access a wider range of activities and family events through developing their communication skills at school. The positive comments, together with the supportive responses in the questionnaires, are in line with the findings of the inspection.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Royal Cross Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspector received **20** completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 23 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	17	85	3	15	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	18	90	2	10	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	18	90	2	10	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	15	75	5	25	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	18	90	2	10	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	17	85	2	10	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	16	80	3	15	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	16	80	3	15	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	18	90	2	10	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	16	80	3	15	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	18	90	2	10	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	18	90	2	10	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	19	95	1	5	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



19 October 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Royal Cross Primary School, Preston, PR2 1NT

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your school recently. I enjoyed the assembly where you demonstrated your marvellous behaviour particularly. You showed me also how well you get on together and with the adults. The theme of Diwali reminded me that you come from different places and backgrounds in Lancashire. The school council showed how well you work together by making very good relationships with pupils from other schools.

You have an outstanding school and Early Years Foundation Stage unit. The lessons are excellent and you make great progress. That is because you have many interesting things to do. The staff look after you very well. You told me how much you appreciate them and that you feel very safe. Your parents and carers say also you are very well provided for and that Royal Cross works hard to keep them in touch. The headteacher is extremely good at managing the school. The adults keep you safe and work hard to give you the best possible chances to learn as much as you can before you move on to the next stage of your lives.

As pleased as I am with the school, I think that some things could be better. Many of you attend school more regularly than you used to. However, a very few could still attend more often and enjoy school more. I have asked the headteacher to work even harder with a few families to make that happen. The governing body is good, but I am asking it if it could think a little differently about the school when it comes to visit, so that it looks more at what you are doing, rather than just what the headteacher and staff are up to. Once again, thank you for your help during the inspection.

Yours sincerely

Terry McKenzie
Lead inspector

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